

Message Text

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SUBJECT: LABOR - INDUSTRIAL STRIKE IN ATHENS AREA PROMPTS
STRONG GOVERNMENT DENUNCIATIONS

1. WITHIN THE PAST TWO DAYS, THE GOG HAS ISSUED TWO STRONG STATEMENTS DENOUNCING "EXTREMISM" WHICH HAS ACCOMPANIED THE STRIKE AT AN ATHENS INDUSTRIAL CONCERN, "ESKIMO", WHICH PRODUCES ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES. THE STRIKE, WHICH IS NOW IN ITS SEVENTH DAY, HAS BEEN HIGHLIGHTED BY "OCCUPATION" OF THE PREMISES BY APPROXIMATELY 70 WORKERS OUT OF TOTAL WORKFORCE OF 900. STRIKERS DEMANDS INCLUDE INTER ALIA 30 PERCENT WAGE INCREASE, DOUBLING OF PRODUCTION BONUS, SPECIAL ALLOWANCES FOR WORK CONDITIONS, AND RETROACTIVE PAYMENT FOR PRODUCTION BONUSES ALLEGEDLY WITHHELD BY MANAGEMENT DURING PERIOD OF MILITARY DICTATORSHIP.

2. MINISTER OF EMPLOYMENT LASKARIS ON JUN 24 MET WITH THE LEADERS OF THE VARIOUS LABOR UNIONS AFFILIATED WITH THE LOCAL LABOR CENTER AND UTILIZED THE OCCASION TO EXHORT WORKERS TO BE ON GUARD AGAINST EXTREMISTS WITHIN THE LABOR SECTOR AND TO ESCHEW EXTREMIST ACTIONS THEMSELVES,
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"IN ORDER THAT THE LABOR CLASS CAN SAFEGUARD ITS ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ITS DEMOCRACY". LASKARIS ASSERTED THAT

THE GOG HAS THE POWER TO HIT HARD -- AND IF NECESSARY EXTERMINATE -- EVERY SUCH EXTREMIST EXPRESSION AND WILL DO SO IF NECESSARY TO DEFEND THE INTERESTS OF DEMOCRACY AND THE COUNTRY. HE INDICATED THE GOVERNMENT WOULD SO ACT IF EXTREMISTS CONTINUE THEIR AGITATION.

3. THE EVENING OF JUN 25, A "GOVERNMENT SOURCE" (ACTUALLY UNDER SECRETARY FOR PRESS AND INFORMATION LAMBRIAS IN COURSE OF BACKGROUND BRIEFING TO POLITICAL EDITORS OF ATHENS NEWSPAPERS) ISSUED STATEMENT TAKING SPECIFIC NOTE OF "ESKIMO" STRIKE. SOURCE ALLEGED THAT "TROTSKYITES, MAOISTS AND EX-ESA (GREEK MILITARY POLICE) PERSONNEL" WERE GUIDING BOTH THE STRIKE AND THE OCCUPATION OF THE "ESKIMO" PLANT, AND PROCEEDED TO IDENTIFY SOME BY NAME. STATEMENT ALSO POINTED OUT THAT OCCUPATION OF THE PLANT SHOWS THAT EFFORT IS UNDER WAY BY "SUSPICIOUS PERSONS" TO CARRY OUT EXTREMIST ACTIONS AND TO PROJECT EXTREME POLITICAL STANDS IN ORDER TO "TRAP THE WORKERS" AND TO CREATE AN UNACCEPTABLE CLIMATE IN THE LABOR AREA. STATEMENT FURTHER NOTED THAT GOG CAN IN NO WAY TOLERATE THE SITUATION, POINTING OUT THAT STRIKE LEADERS HAD REJECTED ADVICE OF NOT ONLY DISTRICT ATTORNEY BUT ALSO THAT OF MINISTRY OF EMPLOYMENT OFFICIALS AND TRADE UNION LEADERS. FINALLY, GOG STATEMENT NOTED THAT PLANT MANAGEMENT IS READY TO HAVE FULL DISCUSSIONS WITH THE STRIKERS ON THEIR DEMANDS.

4. ON JUN 26, PRESIDENT OF GENERAL CONFEDERATION GREEK WORKERS (GSEE) PAPAGEORGIOU INFORMED EMBOFF THAT RANK AND FILE WORKERS THEMSELVES ARE BEGINNING TO PUT STRONG PRESSURE ON THE STRIKE LEADERS TO COME TO TERMS WITH MANAGEMENT. IN ADDITION, HE REVEALED THAT THE GSEE HAD CONSISTENTLY OFFERED ITS GOOD OFFICES BUT HAS ALSO MADE IT CLEAR TO STRIKE LEADERS THAT OCCUPATION OF "EXKIMO" PLANT IS ILLEGAL AND THAT GSEE CANNOT CONDONE IT. THE GSEE LEADER ALSO STATED THAT MANAGEMENT IS TRULY WILLING TO DISCUSS ALL ISSUES WITH STRIKERS BUT THAT TO DATE STRIKE LEADERS HAVE PRECLUDED SUCH DISCUSSIONS BY THEIR TACTICS. PAPAGEORGIOU HOPES THAT WITHIN NEXT
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DAY OR SO INCREASED PRESSURE ON STRIKE LEADERS BY RANK AND FILE WORKERS MAY FORCE FORMER TO INITIATE DISCUSSIONS WITH MANAGEMENT.

5. COMMENT: THE GOG HAD PREVIOUSLY EXPRESSED ITS CONCERN OVER LABOR STRIFE IN LATE MARCH-EARLY APRIL (ATHENS 2404 AND 2636). THIS IS THE FIRST INSTANCE, HOWEVER, IN WHICH IT ATTACKS "EXTREMISTS" AS RESPONSIBLE FOR STRIKE ACTION AND WARNS THEM OF POSSIBLE STRONG GOVERNMENT ACTION IF THEY CONTINUE THEIR AGITATION.

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